Broadband USA Applications Database

Applicant Name: VERDUN ADVENTURE BOUND INC
Project Title: Rappahannock Valley Radio Cooperative
Project Type: Sustainable Broadband Adoption

_______________________ Executive Summary _______________________

a. The Problems: No Local News and Information; No Broadband The Rappahannock Valley is dominated by Washington, D.C. media to the north; Charlottesville and Harrisonburg media to the south and west; and, Fredericksburg media to the east. There is no strong local media. The Rappahannock Valley Radio Cooperative will serve the five jurisdictions of the Valley—Culpeper, Madison, Rappahannock, Fauquier, and Orange counties. These rural counties are among Virginia’s least served by incumbent local electronic media and newspapers. Among dozens of traditional radio stations heard in the valley, only one station carries brief local newscasts that are limited to one town in the region. Two weekly newspapers and only one daily newspaper provide only limited coverage of a single town. Meanwhile, the region (except for two towns and a handful of new housing subdivisions) is without broadband access, dial-up being the common Internet access. Business associations of the Valley are encouraged by the Radio Co-op plans because local news helps drive economic development. Beyond filling the void of local news and listener-interest programming, Radio Co-op programming will support regional economic growth and aims to secure its future audience by promoting broadband demand throughout the Valley to a potential membership of up to approximately 100,000 households. The Solution: To engage and serve the upper Rappahannock Valley of Virginia, Verdun Adventure Bound has established its Radio Co-op as a wholly owned subsidiary. The service is designed to be a full-time hub of electronic information gathering and dissemination over the Internet, providing news and information to the public and to local subscriber radio stations. No such service is currently available. b. Internet Radio: An Innovative Approach to Addressing the Need for Local News and Information and Broadband Adoption Verdun Adventure Bound, Inc., an established 501(c)(3) educational foundation in Rixeyville, Virginia, is applying for a grant to construct, equip, and operate an audio production facility connected via broadband to the Internet. With this 'Internet Radio Station,' the Radio Co-op will teach local citizens how to produce radio programs for and about the local community. The Co-op will train youth, adult, and senior community members to assemble and operate web sites that offers streaming and on-demand audio programming covering subjects that respond to the needs and interests of Virginia’s upper Rappahannock Valley citizens. In addition, conc the news material gathered in this process is a potential product for sale to other media. The Radio Co-op will use its production facility to provide broadband education training and access in support of the educational goals of its parent and its cooperative partners, including first responders, public health entities, schools, colleges, town and county governments, theaters and auditoriums, sports groups, business and civic associations. Programming includes emergency information, local news, instructional programs, health and safety information, community events, employment opportunities, music and local cultural content. The Radio Co-op's full
functioning Internet classroom will support a curriculum for courses in broadband technology, audio production, broadcast journalism, public speaking, and website maintenance. The curricula will include digital literacy; writing for the web; audio, video and website production and maintenance; volunteer organizational structure; and, fundraising. The Radio Co-op aims to achieve long-term sustainability within three years. To make this happen, a scaled tuition structure for students will be established along with a three-level Radio Co-op membership program; and production of revenue-producing programming for sale to local and regional broadcasting entities. c. Areas to be served; population of the target areas, demographic information; estimated potential broadband subscribers project will reach. UPPER RAPPAHANNOCK VALLEY OF VIRGINIA (U.S. Census 2000) Culpeper- 46,203 population; 12,141 households; $63,248 median income Madison - 13,639 population, 4,739 households; $52,472 median income Rappahannock - 7,158 population; 2,788 households; $70,600 median income Fauquier - 66,839 population; 19,842 households; $81,359 median income Orange - 33,139 population; 10,150 households; $65,600 median income Rappahannock Valley totals - Total Population = 166,978 | Total Households = 49,660 | Median Income = $66,655 - People per Sq. Mi = 63.1 | Percent below poverty line = 8.26% Potential broadband subscribers in the upper Rappahannock Valley is expected to be between 50,000 and 100,000, based on 2000 census numbers and population increases over the last decade. Studies of the needs and interests of two broad demographic groups of Rappahannock Valley citizens (undertaken in 2007): 18-45 years old ' This group is attracted by 1) the local social connections that could be made via a local Rappahannock Valley web site; 2) the ability to listen to new local music introduced by the Radio Coop; 3) the possibility of 'having a voice' via the Radio Coop. 45+ years old ' This age group wants to hear 1) local news; 2) older music genres, and 3) high school sports events. This group is interested in the general educational potential of audio programming and of the Web. Some cited the ability to find a job or earn a degree via the Web. More importantly, this group indicated an attraction to learning-by-listening and radio-style programming introducing new local music, local theatre, lectures, and moderated political debates. d. Applicant Qualifications demonstrate ability to implement project and achieve intended results (See upload section: "002_Management_Team") e. Possible Jobs to be created. Between 4 and 24, could be directly created. As the project becomes sustainable with revenue exceeding operating costs, it is possible that the facility could employ a senior staff of up to four professional positions including: General Manager; Production Manager; Traffic Manager; and Chief Engineer. Up to 20 reporters and announcers could be supported as programming services are sold. f. Overall cost of proposed project Building Construction, Equipment & Installation $448,847 3 years of Annual Operations ($145,166 x3) 435,498 TOTAL BTOP/SBA GRANT REQUEST $884,345